

Trends in the Teaching of English

By DR. CLAUDE M. FUESS

As you have heard, I am now, after more than forty years as a schoolmaster, classified as *Emeritus*—which some wit defined, from its Latin origin as *E*, out, and *meritus*, deserves to be—and I have undergone the subsequent and salutary process of deflation. It is easy for a headmaster or a college president in his office to delude himself into thinking that he is a kind of god, whose right there is none to dispute. But when he leaves his job and is no longer a Campus Monarch, his ego is soon punctured. He finds himself, with considerable rapidity, thrown among men and women who feel no awe of him and are ready to talk back, unimpressed by his loud *obiter dicta*.

I am reminded inevitably at this point of the story of the Massachusetts farmer who, when Edward Everett was Governor of the Commonwealth, caught one spring a magnificent Merrimack River salmon and decided to present it to His Excellency. So he hitched up the Old Gray Mare one morning and, kissing his wife good-bye, started in his buggy over the turnpike to Boston. On his way, he stopped at a tavern in Wilmington for a noggin of buttered rum and explained his errand to a group of tap-room loafers. Some of them in a whimsical mood went out to the carriage, took out the box containing the salmon, and substituted a much inferior fish, a pollock. After wetting his whistle considerably, the farmer drove on, arrived at the State House, was admitted to the Governor's office, and with a laudatory speech handed him the gift. The Great Man,

At a meeting of an informal group called the Midwestern English Conference, held last spring at Northern Illinois State Teachers College in DeKalb, the featured speaker was Dr. Claude M. Fuess, retired headmaster of Phillips Andover Academy in Massachusetts. Dr. Fuess has kindly granted the *Bulletin* permission to publish one of his two humorous and illuminating talks.

Summaries prepared by the recorders of two of the six discussion groups at the Midwestern Conference occupy the remaining space in this issue.

obviously pleased, opened the box, stared at the contents, stiffened a bit, and then replied, "Thank you, my good fellow, but I can buy fish at Faneuil Hall market for a penny a pound any day!" Wondering at this unexpectedly frigid comment, the farmer looked in the box himself, saw the pollock, reddened, stammered, and beat an embarrassed retreat. In a saddened mood he took his weary way back, finally reaching the same Wilmington tavern, where he stopped to drown his sorrow. One of the morning loafers, still in the vicinity, watched him enter and then, going out to the buggy, took the box, removed the pollock, and put back the salmon, which the innkeeper had saved. When the old fellow reached his home, he unhitched the horse and still a little fuddled, carried the package into the kitchen, and when his wife asked him how things had gone, tore off the cover. There lay the gorgeous salmon, still as fresh and attractive as when he had taken it off the hook. He looked closely at the sight, shook his head three or four times, and then said, "Fish, up here in Dracut you're the finest salmon the river ever grew, but down in Boston you're just a damned measly pollock!" And as I face this audience, I realize that whatever I may have been at Andover, I am here just a "damned measly pollock."

I suppose that plenty of people besides myself might question my qualifications for being here. If, as some one has said, experience is merely the name that men give to their mistakes, I have had plenty of it and to some extent may have profited by it. As I look back and recall some of my blunders as a teacher, I remind myself of the dumb pitcher in one of the minor leagues. In a tight game, when the opposing team had two men out with a runner on second, they sent in their toughest batter as a pinch hitter. The local manager signaled to the rookie pitcher to give a base on balls; but instead the fellow shot a fast one right over the plate, whereupon the visiting Babe Ruth smashed a home run into the stands and won the game. Afterwards the manager looked grimly at the poor pitcher and said, "You blithering bonehead, why did you do that?" "Gee, boss," stuttered the lad, "I really thought I could fool him." "That's the trouble with you," bellowed the manager. "Every time you think, we lose!"

I am still more than a little frightened when I address an audience of my fellow craftsmen. In my childhood I felt towards my English teacher as Sweet Alice did towards Ben Bolt—you remember that she "wept with delight when he gave her a smile, and trembled with fear at his frown." The worst licking I ever received as a boy was when I wrote with chalk on the blackboard about my English teacher, "Tommy Hayden is a harlot." Needless to say I

didn't know what the word meant, but I was soon instructed. That was the time I discovered that my father was left-handed! If anybody had told me even fifty years ago that I should some day address an audience of school and college teachers in DeKalb, Illinois, I should have thought him demented. And I must admit that I have had plenty of trouble and some sleepless nights thinking up a topic for such an audience, the members of which have heard nearly every funny story, considered and discarded a hundred novel theories, and tried countless experiments in education. The first suggestion was that I should discuss "recent literature pertinent to standards, objectives, and teaching in this area." To this suggestion I had made the honest reply that I knew nothing about them—a very good reason, by the way, for my not choosing that subject. Mr. Connor and I finally agreed, over the telephone, that I might talk about some present trends in English teaching. Here, although I may not be absolutely up to date, I am on more certain ground.

After four years in college and two in graduate school at Columbia University I began my teaching career without ever having faced a class or being told how to conduct it; and for a few exciting weeks I was a beautiful example, as Dr. Johnson once said, of how far "impudence can carry ignorance." Although I had had some excellent teachers, I knew nothing of the philosophy or psychology of pedagogy, and I doubtless ignored every precept in books on "how to teach." But I did discover within a few days that I must somehow hold the attention of my pupils—that I was lost unless I could keep them interested. I learned early that every good teacher must be something of an actor, and employ every legitimate device for keeping the minds of pupils alert. They are there, to begin with, in a resistant mood. It is his business to amuse, persuade, cajole, and even terrify, but he must always hold their attention. When Matthew Arnold, in 1884, was lecturing in Worcester, Massachusetts, a farmer from the country came in late and was rustling around in the back of the hall when an usher came up and whispered, "Would you mind being a little more quiet? The audience is asleep!" An English classroom must never be like that.

I also learned very quickly that teaching is an art, not a science, and is therefore largely a matter of individual personality. You can learn a great deal about pedagogical techniques in a School of Education, and can thus be kept from making fatal blunders. You can even be taught how the mind of a child operates under certain stimuli. But the really great teacher must possess something which the books can never create in him or her—something difficult to define but not difficult for the pupils to recognize. I can no more tell how

to acquire it than I can explain how Keats wrote the "Ode to a Grecian Urn," or Beethoven the Fifth Symphony, or Winslow Homer painted "West Wind;" but that it does exist, to the great benefit of education in general, seems to me so obvious that it needs no emphasis or amplification.

The whole business seems to me to be summed up in some verses by Arthur Guiterman, which I keep framed on my desk:

Mark Hopkins sat on one end of a log
And a farm boy sat on the other.
Mark Hopkins came as a pedagogue
And taught as an older brother.
I don't care what Mark Hopkins taught,
If his Latin was small and his Greek was naught,
For the farmer boy he thought, thought he,
All through the lecture time and quiz,
"The kind of man I mean to be
Is the kind of man Mark Hopkins is!"

No printed word or spoken plea
Can teach young hearts what men should be,
Not all the books on all the shelves,
But what the teachers are themselves.
For Education is Making Men;
So it is now, so was it when
Mark Hopkins sat on one end of a log
And James Garfield sat on the other.

My career—if you wish to dignify it by that term!—my career as a classroom teacher began in George School, Pennsylvania, in the autumn of the year 1907, and continued, with some interruptions, until the spring of 1933, when I became Headmaster of Phillips Academy, Andover. My interest in teaching and teachers certainly did not cease with that transition, and I have tried to follow what has happened in the profession—sometimes with delight, occasionally with sorrow, but always with keen interest. Over this period of slightly more than forty-five years, momentous changes have taken place in the substance, the methods, and the aims of English teaching, in both school and college.

The required reading in schools has been vastly widened and is much more intelligently chosen than it was in 1901, when I graduated from a Central New York high school. The requirements then included for intensive study *Silas Marner* and *The Ancient Mariner* (the titles of which were invariably confused in the pupils' minds!), *The Vicar of Wakefield* and *The Last of the Mohicans* (strange

juxtaposition), Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Milton's *Minor Poems* and Burke's *Speech on Conciliation with the Colonies*. We had also to memorize long passages from "The Vision of Sir Launfal," "The Psalm of Life," and *Marmion*. This was far ill-suited, for the most part, to adolescent minds, and some of us in the New England Association of English Teachers set out to change the literary menu. Before I had ended my active English teaching in 1933 we had persuaded the College Entrance Examination Board and the various college admissions offices to permit a broader choice of books to be read. By that time, teachers could use whatever novels or plays they liked, and enjoyed the privilege of altering the requirements from year to year. One consequence was that English classes became rather exciting, especially when we were considering Galsworthy, Virginia Woolf, and Walpole, as well as Dickens, Thackeray, and George Eliot. Within a quarter of a century the tone and mood of English teaching had changed, very much for the better.

The instruction when I first presided over a classroom was formal, and much stress was laid on memorization of material in a textbook. The teacher asked questions, and the victim answered as best he could from what he could recall. Shortly after the First World War my friends in the profession began to introduce discussion as a feature of the classroom exercises. This probably was a direct, or indirect, consequence of the Progressive Education Movement, which banned rigidity and formality in the classroom. At any rate, almost before we realized it, our pupils were participants, not just followers, and the whole spirit of the classroom had changed. Teaching had been made alive!

I was never enthusiastic about the Progressive Education movement as I saw it in operation, and it certainly did attract an amazing number of fanatics and lunatics, who did it much harm. Furthermore, the leaders seemed to me super-sensitive to criticism and extraordinarily deficient in a sense of humor. Having been brought up with a respect for tradition, I could not suddenly abandon my faith in discipline as essential in the training of children. But the Progressive Educators in their insistence that interest is a stronger motive than fear, that education is not so much a pounding in as a drawing out, were reiterating a doctrine that all top-notch teachers soon or later learn for themselves. Most of what was good in Progressive Education was adopted within a reasonable length of time by most so-called conservative teachers. It was like the Populist Party in the 1890's, the best of whose ideas were quietly inserted in the platforms of the Republican and Democratic parties—without acknowledgment!

This trend towards informality was fostered, in schools which could afford the luxury, by the establishment of smaller classroom sections. In my early days as a teacher I often had divisions of forty or fifty, which took much of my physical and mental energy merely to subdue. In the early 1930's in many of the Eastern independent schools we reduced classroom sections so that they were as small as twelve or fifteen and thus placed the pupils in a much more intimate relationship with the instructor. This Round Table, or Conference, system undoubtedly diminished somnolence and stimulated participation, thus directly encouraging not only law and order but originality of thought. Regarding it, I have only one reservation. In the good old days of large sections a truly great teacher often met every member of the Senior Class, and each student, therefore, felt the impact of his personality. Nowadays the ablest instructor on the staff may be known to only a relatively small number of undergraduates. One method of meeting this objection is to hold weekly lectures by the more distinguished teachers for the entire class so that the pupils in the smaller sections may at least get acquainted with them. What is one to reply, however, when a Headmaster announces, as one did to me not long ago, "But all my teachers are distinguished!" Fortunate, fortunate gentleman! Or rather, Poor Deluded Soul! But everything considered, I believe that the advantage lies with the smaller sections. I only wish that it were practicable to extend to the public schools throughout the country the benefits which accrue to the independent schools through their smaller classes.

I am under the impression that English teaching on all levels, even including the graduate schools, has improved during the past fifty years. While I was working for my doctorate at Columbia University, I was subjected to some of the worst instruction I have ever had. Many of the teachers were indifferent, some were stupid, and nearly all were uninspired. It was a delightful change when Brander Matthews came into the lecture room and without any preparation chatted about the American writers whom he had known. I have never known any hour duller than that which I spent in Anglo-Saxon unless it was that which I spent in Middle English—and all because the teacher made no effort, simply going through the routine necessary to draw his salary and leave him free to carry on research. Nowadays, especially in the smaller colleges, a professor is supposed to make at least some slight attempt to arouse his students, and pedantry is no guarantee of promotion.

When the classroom sections were made smaller, it was possible in some degree to divide pupils on the basis of their aptitude and

demonstrated accomplishment into "Fast" and "Slow" divisions. I have long felt that in this country we are willing to spend huge sums on mentally-deficient children but do almost nothing to help the bright ones to go along farther and faster. By the 1920's I had convinced myself that the plan of segregating students who were both exceptionally able and exceptionally ambitious was for them very profitable. It is important, of course, that nobody should be forced against his desires into such a division and that the grading should be so adjusted as not to reduce the chances of a pupil's receiving honor marks. But with these minor reservations I am in favor of allowing children to proceed as rapidly as they can and wish to go. This is Nature's way and it should be adopted by the schools.

I was brought up under an unnutritious diet of very formal grammar, with plenty of diagramming sentences on the blackboard, and I carried with me into my teaching, rather against my better judgment, a feeling that parsing sentences was good for the adolescent soul. In my early classes we used a little red textbook—red refers to the color of the cover—called Woolley's *Handbook*, which carried the study of grammar beyond the point of absurdity. It was easy for the teacher, who merely had to set the class correcting sentences which contained gross defiances of proper grammatical construction. I remember how we used to struggle over "I knew it to be he (or him)"—a sentence which, as far as I know, I have never employed in ordinary conversation. I could not find that pupils who knew the rules by heart spoke any better English than those who didn't. In fact, I could never forget the story of the child who, after mangling her tenses, was ordered by the teacher to stay after school and write "I have gone" fifty times on the blackboard. The next morning, the teacher found a note reading, "I have written 'I have gone' fifty times, and now I have went home." Once in those bygone days in my department a discussion arose about some minor technical point in grammar, such as a dangling participle, and I rather viciously suggested that it be referred to Brander Matthews. The excellent Professor Matthews ruled against my grammatically-minded friend, and ended, "Tell the fellow to go to hell—he's a damned quibbling purist!" For years after, the teacher was branded with that unflattering phrase! I can recall how ardently I fought against the use of *like* as a conjunction, without being able to explain why; and nowadays "It looks like it was going to rain" has the sponsorship of the *Atlantic Monthly* and the *New York Times*. The sooner we learn that grammar is a matter of usage, and treat it as such, the better off we shall be. When I think of the hours I

wasted attempting to differentiate between the uses of *shall* and *will*, I feel like weeping. A student may be able to distinguish between the gerund and the gerundive without being capable of producing a respectable sentence.

About 1920, English teachers began talking about *précis* writing—the summarization of paragraphs and passages in simpler terms and words. The practice unquestionably was good training for English pupils, compelling them to weigh the value of words and to concentrate on ideas in their reading. Many conventional teachers, training in the Good Old System, didn't like *précis* questions, largely because they were unpredictable and left the examinee dependent on his own individual ability in a college entrance test. "Cramming" for *précis* questions was almost impossible, even for the seventh son of a seventh son. I believe that the use of *précis* tests helped to revolutionize the teaching of English by throwing the pupil back on his own responsibility and making him think for himself.

In my early days as a teacher it was thought that daily themes written outside the class were of tremendous importance. I recall that in one crucial year I took two divisions of approximately the same measured intelligence and gave one four or five prepared themes a week and the other no writing except a paragraph or two written during the regular classroom period and carefully corrected. At the end of the year the second group were clearly as proficient as the first, and in some respects were better. I had demonstrated to my own satisfaction that the continuous writing of long themes was both boring and numbing. Two or three paragraphs written as anybody would compose a letter will tell a teacher more about a pupil's stylistic weakness than a whole folio of "formal themes," often done with the aid of the class Bright Boy. This information should be gratefully received by English teachers, especially those who are accustomed to spending hours with red and blue pencils. The object for them—and for the pupil—should be to make him write less—and better!

In the 1930's the psychologists came to the front with their objective tests of both the aptitude and achievement variety. That these have been of inestimable value to college admission officers I am not prepared to deny. They obviously are helpful as evidence in predicting a candidate's future as a freshman or sophomore. But the advocates of objective tests did a disservice to English teachers by minimizing the importance of the traditional essay type of question. Having concluded that the essay had little significance as evidence of a candidate's ability to do college work, they then pro-

ceeded to declare *ex cathedra* that it had been stressed too much by teachers. What they really said amounted to the assumption that nobody can be taught to write—or rather that nobody can *learn* to write. Much more proof must be presented before I can be convinced that assigned themes in the classroom, accompanied or followed by constructive comments, will not enable boys and girls to express themselves more clearly on paper.

When I first began the teaching of English and American literature, I followed the chronological order, beginning with Chaucer and Shakespeare and proceeding down the centuries to Tennyson and Browning, with considerable emphasis on biography and personality. We used as a base a textbook by Moody and Lovett, and I am sure that my pupils enjoyed the course. Nowadays more emphasis is given, I am told, to types of literature, and the instructor stresses the poem or the essay more than the writer. Whether or not this is progress I am not sure, but I will venture the opinion that in the long run either method depends on the kind of enthusiasm which the teacher is able to arouse. The principal object is to get the pupil to read with understanding, appreciation, and pleasure, and it makes little difference whether you begin with *Lycidas*—if anybody reads that nowadays—or with the young Puritan poet who wrote it.

On two matters I am, like Walter de la Mare's Old Jim Jay, "stuck fast in yesterday." I still believe, as I believed forty years ago, that it is good for the student's soul to memorize and recite a considerable amount of first-rate poetry, like Shakespeare's sonnets, Gray's *Elegy*, Tennyson's *Ulysses*—if I do not worry you by being old-fashioned—and even the verses of Edna St. Vincent Millay or Robert Frost. An acquaintance with the *Ode to a Nightingale* furnishes a standard by which other poetry may be judged. And how refreshing it is, after reading some of the drivel which passes for poetry these days, just to recite

"And I have felt

A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man,
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of a thought
And rolls through all things"

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In the second place, I regret that so little time is spent nowadays on public speaking and the proper management of the voice. On the walls of the lecture room at Amherst where I slept under the eminent Professor Genung, author of the famous or notorious *Rhetoric*, were Latin words which may be freely translated, "He who knows but cannot express what he knows is as if he knew nothing." These might well be inscribed in letters of gold in every English classroom. We teachers should do everything in our power to make our pupils more articulate, able not only to prepare essays for examinations but also to stand on their feet and convince an audience. Silence is proverbially golden, but strong, silent men are easily underestimated.

In my lifetime I have known hundreds of English teachers from all over the United States, on the school and college levels. I have no time here to argue the point, but I shall content myself with expressing the categorical opinion that the teaching of English is today more intelligent, more discriminating, and more effective than it was fifty years ago. There may be still on school and college faculties drones and dry-as-dusts and bullies, but they are well hidden. More and more in recent years, especially since the Great Depression, young men and women have become sensitive and responsive to the Durable Satisfaction to be derived from working constructively with the Coming Generation. Indeed I could mention several who have deliberately put aside alluring opportunities to make fortunes in business for the sake of less spectacular careers in the classroom. Those of you who have children are aware that plenty of brilliant teaching is being done right at this moment not only in the large and famous schools but also in smaller ones scattered throughout the nation. Without being prigs or pharisees, these young instructors have learned, with William James, that "the great use of a life is to spend it for something that outlasts it."

In the last act of *Anthony and Cleopatra*, Iras says to her mistress in one of the most moving, most pathetic, lines that the Great Master ever wrote, "The bright day is done, and we are for the dark." Many of our contemporaries in these chequered times cherish this pessimism in their hearts, feeling that the constructive period of human civilization is over and that we are entering, with tragic inevitability, on another Dark Age. But having been for long a teacher, surrounded by youthful minds and in the midst of youthful vitality, I cannot help being still hopeful. When Dr. Johnson met his old schoolmate, Dr. Taylor, the latter said to him, "Dr. Johnson, you have been a philosopher. I, too, have tried to be a philosopher, but cheerfulness was always creeping in!" Boys and

girls are all impulsive but well-meaning animals; and it is the task of the teacher, perhaps of the English teacher especially, to find out what they are like, encourage their aspirations and implement their dreams, sympathize with their growing pains, and help them not only to know but to express what they know. This is our function as teachers of English. It is our opportunity—and our glory!

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Reports of Work Groups

FIFTH MIDWESTERN ENGLISH CONFERENCE

GROUP I

What are desirable standards and outcomes in the teaching of writing?

Chairman: Louise Nelson, DeKalb Township High School

Discussion Leaders: Grant Mauk, Hinsdale Community High School;
Robert Lee Blair, Eastern Illinois State College

Reporter: Mary Mills, Whitewater State College

To open the discussion, Dr. Blair reviewed the new concept of instruction in English, which today is much broader than imparting a knowledge of grammar, spelling, and paragraphing and which has given rise to the Language Arts movement. This new concept recognizes that social living depends on the ability to communicate ideas. Dr. Blair asked that the workshop consider what standards are desirable for securing better communications and whether common standards for written and spoken English are desirable.

Mr. Mauk named logical thinking and clear self-expression as two common objectives in the teaching of writing. He asked the group to consider whether English teachers are emphasizing practical purposes enough, whether students spend too much time writing essays and research papers and too little time writing letters and filling out application forms, and whether enough attention is devoted to oral composition.

Everyone agreed that students need help with social correspondence but that the projects must be real to be worthwhile. To make the letters real, one teacher assigns letters to be written during the semester and allows the student to write the letters as needs arise. Another makes his assignments at a time when a classmate is ill or the group needs to write a thank-you note.

The use of the essay or theme as a form of creative writing was defended in the belief that this type of composition helps a student to seek values in his own personal living, to determine the things he believes in, to think clearly and specifically and to avoid generalization, and provides a release for creative emotion. However, it was agreed that themes and essays are more successful for the select group than for an average group.

The group agreed that in writing themes students need constant motivation and that this motivation can usually be secured by having ample discussion before and after the themes are written, by publishing the material in either the school paper or the local paper, and by reading the themes in class. But the greatest motivation of all comes from praise. Several members suggested that a teacher should find something good to say about every composition and that teachers might well accomplish more by accenting the good than by constantly criticizing the bad.

The group were unable to agree on any standards although they agreed that standards are necessary and that more is required in English usage than the communication of an idea. The group also agreed that grammar needs to be taught but that it must be taught in the modern concept. Several teachers suggested that their students learn grammar willingly when they recognize it as a tool for writing and speaking.

College English programs were criticized because entering students are often subjected to entrance and placement tests which in the minds of some "are fifty years behind the times in their requirements of knowledge of formal grammar" and because future English teachers are ordinarily not so well trained to teach grammar and writing as to teach literature.

Four conclusions grew out of the discussion. First, a successful performance is necessary. The task assigned a student may be hard but it must be an assignment that he can accomplish successfully and thereby gain confidence in his ability. Second, only meaningful work will teach. Exercises as such have little educational value, but writing or speaking for a purpose important to the student is worthwhile. Third, work done in class is more valuable than work done outside of class. So strong was the feeling on this point that some teachers doubted the value of any composition written outside of class. And lastly, it is better to work and re-work a few assignments until they are well done than it is to cover half-heartedly a large number of assignments.

MARY MILLS, *Reporter.*

GROUP III

What are desirable standards and outcomes in the teaching of literature?

Chairman: Frederick R. White, Beloit College

Discussion Leaders: Ruth Schmitt, Proviso High School, Maywood
Robert A. Shiley, Western Illinois State College

Reporter: Walter F. Brown, Indiana University, Calumet Center

Chairman White pointed out that he had discovered on investigating the preparatory reading backgrounds of twenty-five of his students that these backgrounds varied widely, from a rather good knowledge of some of the better known classics to a very meager knowledge of any reading. Because of the wide variance in knowledge brought by the students to the college classroom, the problem of keeping interest in the class is significant, and boredom is likely to be prevalent.

What to do with this variety of student poses the following questions: What sort of technique will adequately reach these young people? How are we to discover their needs and attend to them? How much should the teacher be interested in his students as members of society, and how much time and effort should be spent in teaching these students how to meet and solve their problems here?

Miss Ruth Schmitt of Proviso High School, Maywood, Illinois, the first discussion leader, stated that perhaps now the colleges are facing a problem that had been presented to the high schools around 1920: "How do we educate the masses?" In the broad and comprehensive educational program of the public schools, the problem of what to do with the worst pupils as well as the best ones has been solved to some extent. What are the colleges going to do with the same problem?

Miss Schmitt believes that the high schools are trying to train the youth for the adult he will become. It is the hope and aim of the high schools that the graduate will be trained to face life without fear, frustration, or persisting doubt. His training will also present him with moral, ethical, and spiritual reassurance. It is the hope of high school English teachers that their graduates will have developed the habit of voluntary reading; that they will have the critical paraphernalia to tell the shoddy in writing from the good; that they will be able to read with discernment and appreciation. The high school graduate should be able to integrate his reading with his own experience, to discover and evaluate the purpose of

what he is reading, and to be sensitive to the author's whims and moods. These then are the ideals, the hopes of a high school teacher of English.

But, alas, performance does not measure up to the standards set. Rather sadly Miss Schmitt asked the following questions:

1. Should we assume that a student knows how to read?
2. What can we do about a poor reader?
3. How do we cultivate taste in reading?
4. What use, if any, should be made of the comic book in the high school classroom? What should be the attitude of the teacher toward it?
5. What use can be made of radio, moving pictures, and television to help bring about the above-named desirable qualities?
6. In high school courses, should language and literature be separated or combined? Does the teacher's ability or lack of it in language or literature determine the answer to this question?

At this point the second discussion leader, Professor Robert A. Shiley of Western Illinois State College, took over. He remarked that the three R's of melodrama—ride, raid, and rescue—have some pertinence to today's teaching. Education is being taken for a ride by science. The raid is on. Are we possibly entering a new bookless age? During the last three decades there has been a shifting of aims and objectives in the teaching of literature, but now there seems to be a rather general agreement among teachers concerning the aims of their subject. The disagreement comes in how to gain these objectives. Young people are very much interested in moving pictures, radio, television, and phonograph records. Why not turn these interests to good effect in the classroom? There are many fine moving pictures easily available that can help implement the classroom teaching. Also many good long-playing records and a number of television programs can be of valuable aid here.

Professor Shiley believes that successful teaching should produce suitable standards in the students, and that not only should the students be brought up to these levels but that they should also appreciate them. There is a lot of talk today about personality development and the felt needs of the students. Just how important these are is yet to be decided.

At this point Professor Shiley read a number of boners from examination papers of college students in English literature who show a sometimes rather bewildering lack of understanding of what is being studied.

Professor Shiley then took up the question of raising doubts in the students' minds, and cautioned against going to extremes here. He suggested that the relationship of the teacher to the student should be a carefully thought out, balanced one. He believed that the teacher should be especially careful not to assume an air of omniscience.

Here the meeting was turned over by the chairman to statements and discussion from the floor, and the question of what to stress in the teaching of literature immediately arose. Broken down into simple contrast, the opposing views were these: first, the aesthetic side of literature is the important side, and this attribute should be stressed. Literature is art; organization is important in art; organization is very important to produce the aesthetic effect. Without organization—little art, little aesthetic effect.

The principal proponent of this viewpoint stated that the failure of the student to get the required aesthetic appreciation was to be laid at the door of the teacher. Teachers do not work hard enough sometimes. Any work of literary art can be effectively taught for aesthetic appreciation. The teacher's effort and persistence are important to produce this appreciation in the student.

The opposing viewpoint was this: We should prepare students for life. The *content* of literature is important here. Content should be stressed, and its application to present-day life should be made. The great majority of high school graduates and college students are not interested in the aesthetic viewpoint; they are interested in how to manage their lives successfully and with some satisfaction. Stressing the content of literature will more adequately and satisfyingly produce this result than stressing of the aesthetic side.

One or two agreed that aesthetic appreciation was important, but that technical analysis was not the proper way to develop this characteristic.

One or two others called for a definition of terms. On this hopeful note, and with the promise of a better tomorrow, the first session came to a close.

The Saturday morning session of this group was devoted largely to clarification and amplification of the two opposing viewpoints introduced toward the close of the Friday afternoon session—should literature be taught as literature or as a way of life? It became obvious that these two points of view had little chance of being reconciled as the discussion continued. It is likely that the constructive value of this discussion lies in the stimulation to the thinking of those present. Though few who expressed viewpoints seemed willing to relinquish any part of their opinions, each side was presented

with enough detail and force that the impact should have some persisting effect in the thinking of those who listened and talked.

It seemed clear that most of the high school teachers who expressed opinions recognized the value and importance of the aesthetic side of literature, but they had doubts how to stress this side without losing the attention of their pupils and neglecting what the teachers considered the more important aim—to train young people to be better human beings and citizens by applying the content of literature to life.

The college teachers expressing opinions seemed not to feel the imperativeness of this aim quite so much, but still considered it important. Others felt that by stressing the organization of a literary work—the shaping of order out of chaos—the same end, a better human being and citizen, would be indirectly but effectively reached.

In closing out this morning session, several thought it would be a good idea that somewhere in next year's program there should be a short literary unit taught to demonstrate several different methods.

These could be :

1. *Formal*—the organizational side of the unit stressed.
2. *Ideological*—the ideas in the unit emphasized.
3. *Ethical*—the values in this category emphasized.
4. *Social*—the application of ideas in the unit to society in general.
5. *Personal*—the application of ideas in the unit to the student's own experiences.